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Lumber production lower than last year, UM researcher says

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November 13, 1989

LUMBER PRODUCTION LOWER THAN LAST YEAR, UM RESEARCHER SAYS
MISSOULA --

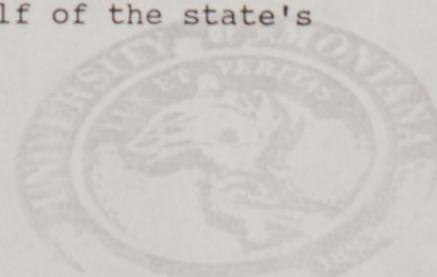
Lumber production in the first three quarters of 1989 has been lower than in those quarters in 1988, when production was decreased by last summer's millworker strikes, reports a researcher with the University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

Sawmill operators indicate that very cold weather during the first quarter of this year and timber shortages have curtailed Montana's 1989 lumber production, says Charles Keegan, the bureau's forest industry research director.

In cooperation with the Montana Wood Products Association, the bureau has compiled figures from a survey of 32 plants. Those plants produced more than 90 percent of the state's forest products.

Montana's lumber production so far this year is 1,130 million board feet, compared to 1,168 million board feet in the same period in 1988, Keegan says. Lumber production in the third quarter of 1989 was about 385 million board feet, up from 371 million board feet in the second quarter, he says.

Plywood production so far this year is 549 million square feet, up from 436 million square feet in the first three quarters of 1988, Keegan says. "Strikes had a very large impact on the plywood industry in 1988, affecting more than half of the state's



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plywood production capacity for several months," he says.

Plywood production declined slightly from 188 million square feet in the second quarter of 1989 to 177 million square feet in the third quarter of 1989, Keegan says. However, he says plywood prices have been high and 177 million square feet still represents a relatively high level of output for Montana's industry.

Production employment in Montana's forest products industry rose from 4,418 workers in the second quarter of 1989 to about 4,478 workers in the third quarter, Keegan says.

Production workers' wages increased slightly, from \$31.6 million in the second quarter of 1989 to \$32 million in the third quarter, he says. The increase was due partly to the increased number of workers and to bonus payments made in August, Keegan adds.

The figures refer only to production workers at sawmills, plywood plants, pulp and paper mills, particleboard and fiberboard plants and utility pole plants. These production workers account for about half the workers in Montana's forest products industry. Estimates do not include the several thousand workers in logging, trucking and other related jobs affected by the strike.

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